



## TRANSPORTATION SAFETY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

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**TO:** Transportation Safety Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Evan Vass

**FROM:** Thanh H. Dang, Public Works Planner

**DATE:** August 18, 2009

**RE:** Transportation Safety Commission Minutes for August 6, 2009

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The Transportation Safety Commission met on Thursday August 6, 2009 at the Department of Planning & Community Development, 409 S Main Street.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Chairman), Officer Greg Deeds (Police), Sgt. William Keller (Police), Doug Stader (DMV), Lee Eschelman (JMU), Calvin Ferrell (Citizen), Thanh Dang (Public Works)

Guests Present include: Councilor Ted Byrd

*Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens attend Commission meetings to avoid detaining citizens for the entire meeting. However, any citizen is welcome to stay for the entire meeting.*

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Welcome

Old Business

### **1. Yielding to Pedestrians at Intersections – Signage Update**

Ms. Dang presented temporary educational signage options as shown at July's meeting and described Public Works' staff recommendation to mount the signs temporarily into small concrete pads in grassed strip between curb and sidewalk or into the sidewalk. Recommended was the sign that reads/illustrates "Turning Vehicles Yield to Pedestrians." Commission members recommended that Public Works proceed

with installing these signs upon receiving citizen complaints at intersections in an effort to educate and bring attention to motorists.

A discussion was had regarding the letter from the Commission to JMU as suggested at July's meeting. Because JMU will be presenting its Comprehensive Master Plan to city staff and meet with Public Works staff to discuss transportation needs and concerns on September 1, it was agreed that the original letter was not needed. It was suggested that a follow up letter of encouragement to JMU be sent after the September 1 meetings.

Discussions regarding no right turns on red was had. Ms. Blessing noted that some drivers, particularly older drivers, don't know the rules of the road – they may have changed since the individual first received their license. It was also noted that many people drive with bad habits.

## **2. South High & Grace St**

Mr. Eschelman inquired about split phasing South High & Grace Sts and if the change was going to move forward. At the meeting Ms. Dang said she would inquire with PW staff. *Ms. Dang was reminded after the meeting that during the July 2009 Commission meeting, it was recommended that no changes along corridors between JMU and the city be made until a discussion was had between city staff and JMU regarding JMU's Master Comprehensive Plan. Staff and the Commission would like to look at the transportation system and transportation safety holistically rather than piecemeal.*

Mr. Eschelman noted that he will conduct a count of pedestrian movements when students return to assist with further consideration of possible relocation of the crosswalk across High St.

New Business

## **3. Virginia Ave & 3<sup>rd</sup> Street – Pedestrian Accident**

On August 1, 2009 at 9:15 PM a pedestrian crossing Virginia Avenue at 3<sup>rd</sup> St was struck by a motor vehicle traveling southbound. Officer Deeds provided details about the accident. The pedestrian was crossing against the traffic signal, at night. Conditions that night were rainy/wet.

Ms. Dang reminded the Commission members that they have provided a letter of support for the Safe Routes to School grant application to fund sidewalk and pedestrian crossing/signal improvements at this intersection as part of providing safe routes to school to Waterman Elementary School. This application will be completed and submitted in December 2009. *Note also that improvements for pedestrian signals and sidewalks at this intersection is proposed for inclusion in the update of the city's Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans, expected council adoption in Spring 2010.*

## **4. North Main St and Rock St Intersection – Sight Distance**

The southwest corner at North Main St and Rock St has poor sight distance for vehicles traveling eastbound on Rock St. At this intersection are a wall, handrail, trees, and shrubbery on the property of Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority (HRHA). Ms. Dang & Mr. Drew Williams met with Mr.

Michael Wong, executive director of HRHA, prior to the Commission meeting to discuss opportunities to improve sight distance. The Commission recommended that Public Works and HRHA work to improve sight distance by trimming the trees and shrubbery, and recognized that due to the conditions of the roadway (Rock St traveling eastbound up to the intersection sits at a lower grade than Main St) that other options will likely need to be explored.

Ms. Dang suggested the possibility of constructing a curb extension at the corner to allow vehicles to pull out further into the intersection. Sgt. Keller suggested that staff consider making Rock St one way traveling westbound. Commission members noted that in addition to this change removing the sight distance problem, Rock St is narrow for two way traffic between Mason St and Main St, and that a one way street may increase on street parking opportunities between Main St and Liberty St.

Agreeing with Sgt. Keller's recommendation, the Commission recommended that Public Works further explore the possibility of designating Rock St as one way traveling westbound. Councilman Byrd noted that the W. Rock St bridge is on the schedule for being rebuilt in 2010 and that it may be good at that time to make changes.

#### **5. Country Club Ct**

Officer Deeds presented the issue. Vehicles traveling from Country Club Road onto Country Club Ct are not stopping at the T-intersection into the neighborhood on Country Club Ct. Officer Deeds inquired what would warrant the stop sign to be changed so that vehicles entering the neighborhood did not have to stop. Councilor Byrd inquired whether Country Club Ct was public or private.

The Commission asked Public Works staff to review this area and present again at the next meeting.

Other Business

#### **6. Safe Kids Grant/ Pole Mounted Radar Speed Display**

Officer Deeds shared with the Commission a small grant opportunity from Safe Kids. He also presented a pole mounted sign with radar that displays speed (driver feedback) and flashes a white strobe when a violator exceeds the speed limit. He has seen this used in Purcellville, and another Commission member said they have seen it used in Fairfax County. These are similar to current HPD speed trailers, but are permanently mounted and are not portable.

A discussion on assumed effectiveness of the sign and radar speed display was had and Commission members asked if Public Works staff could research the signs effectiveness (before and after research) and also call Purcellville and Fairfax County to inquire. Ms. Dang suggested that the Commission consider how to limit the use of these signs, i.e. only to school zones. Overuse of signage often leads to people ignoring them.

#### **7. Discussion – Vision and Goals of Transportation Safety Commission**

Ms. Dang opened up a discussion on the Vision of Goals of the Transportation Safety Commission and asked if the commission members had any comments or suggestions. Mr. Van Wyk stated he liked that staff bounced ideas off the Commission. Mr. Blessing stated that a few months ago he had questioned the purpose of the Commission and noted that the Commission provides support to Public Works staff with letters, particularly when addressing citizen complaints/concerns as well as for grant applications. Mr. Blessing also noted that frequent a frequent meeting regime is good to have.

Mr. Van Wyk welcomed and encouraged Councilman Byrd and the other council members to send issues related to transportation safety to Commission for review or consideration.

#### **8. Sight Distance Improvements**

Mr. Blessing noted that sight distance at Blue Ridge Dr and Country Club Rd, and Blue Ridge Dr and Old Furnace Rd has been improved by property owners cutting down a tree and bushes, respectively.

#### **9. Franklin & Ott Streets**

Councilman Byrd presented resident concerns at the intersection of Franklin & Ott Sts. Ms. Dang noted that this issue was reviewed in May 2009 (see May 2009 minutes) by the Commission and that 3 accidents occurred at this intersection in the last three years. *Review of data after this meeting showed again that two accidents resulted from drivers traveling on Ott St not obeying the stop sign and the third accident did not occur in the intersection but was a result of a passing vehicle knocking off a mirror on a parked vehicle.*

It was noted that there is an increasing number of people working downtown and changes in traffic patterns should continue to be evaluated.

The Commission recommended that Public Works staff conduct traffic counts at this location to re-evaluate placement of stop signs per citizens' requests. *Staff will conduct traffic counts in mid-September after the universities have opened and will report results thereafter.*

#### **10. Kelly St**

Councilman Byrd presented concerns received from citizens about speeding and cut through traffic on Kelly St, particularly the lower section. It was noted that speed trailers have been placed on that street by HPD.

Ms. Dang noted that neighbors (specifically those involved with the Northeast Neighborhood Association) have been invited to participate in the Neighborhood Speed Watch Program as well as enroll in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. Sgt Keller and Officer Deeds will ask bike officers to set up radar in this location. *More information at [www.harrisonburgva.gov/trafficcalming](http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/trafficcalming).*

#### **11. Future Special Presentations**

Commission members requested a future presentation about Public Works' new Traffic Management Program camera at South Main Street and Port Republic Road.

## **12. Announcements**

None.

**NEXT MEETING TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 1 AT 8:30AM at Community Development Classroom, 409 S Main Street.**

This meeting time and date was made to accommodate a Commission member for this Fall semester. Members present did not object to change. We will have meetings every First Tuesday of the Month.

Adjourned at 10:15am